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SUBJECT: Kunar Preparing for Influx of Refugees from Bajaur

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11. (U) This is a joint Embassy Kabul/Embassy Islamabad cable.

12. (SBU) Summary: An estimated 180 Afghan families living in Pakistan have fled into Afghanistan's Kunar province after Bajaur Agency issued an October 3 order directing all Afghans to leave within three days. Kunar Province's Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) estimates that an additional 20,000 Afghans could migrate into Kunar based on interviews conducted with the families that have registered over the past few days. However, UNHCR in Islamabad and the Governor of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan did not think that was likely. Pashtun tribal leaders from the elected Kunar Provincial Council met on October 6 to pledge their support to provincial authorities to accommodate any influx of new refugees from Pakistan. In keeping with Pashtunwali tradition, the overall sentiment of Kunar residents remains one of acceptance and the desire to assist the returning Afghans. End Summary.

13. (SBU) On October 3, the Political Agent in Bajaur Agency, Pakistan issued an order for Afghans to leave within three days. UNHCR's Country Representative met with the Governor of NWFP October 10 to express concern and clarify whether those being expelled were not registered refugees; UNHCR came away satisfied that they were not. The Governor said the order was aimed at those illegally in Pakistan, and was motivated by security concerns related to the current military operations against militants. Between 3000-5000 people had left, while about 400 moved to Lower Dir in Pakistan. UNHCR has heard that an expulsion order was also issued in Taxila (near Islamabad) and will send a team to check. UNHCR is concerned that similar orders may be issued in Khyber and Kurram Agencies - a much more serious matter given the large number of Afghans living there. (Note. Embassy Islamabad will follow up to see whether Pakistani officials have such plans. End Note)

14. (U) Kunar's Director of Refugees and Repatriation Sardar Khan reports there are 4,391 Afghan returnee and Pakistani refugee families living in Kunar province, concentrated in Shigal, Marawara, and Dangam districts. He therefore estimates a total of approximately 23,000 displaced people residing in Kunar - based on an estimate of five persons per family plus an additional 1,000 unregistered persons. Media reports of up to 40,000 refugees in Kunar seem to be exaggerated. Refugees, comprised mostly of women

and children, have settled primarily with friends or family. Provincial authorities estimate that two-thirds of the families are Pakistani and one-third Afghan.

¶15. (U) Media and UN estimates of Afghan refugees remaining in Bajaur Tribal Agency range from 50,000 to 70,000. Approximately 30 percent of the refugees are originally from Kunar province while the rest are predominately from Nuristan, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces. DoRR expects that the majority of refugees from Kunar province will return to their extended families living within the border districts of Narai, Dangam, Shigal, Marawara, Kas Konar, and Noorgal.

¶16. (U) UNHCR has taken the lead role in coordinating all humanitarian assistance (HA) efforts of UN organizations (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP), in cooperation with ICRC, in Kunar province. UNHCR has already committed to the construction of 3,000 room-additions to existing dwellings to shelter refugee families that are living in tents. Afghan Red Crescent continues to verify numbers of refugees and distributed aid to 2,123 families in Shigal district during the last week of September. Most refugees have been arriving in Kunar with little more than the clothes on their backs.

¶17. (U) Provincial authorities anticipate the greatest need will be food; however, other assistance will still be required, especially material aid for winterization. To address immediate needs, Task Force Duke's Civil Military Operations (CMO) ordered significant quantities of food and material supplies and is ready to provide more assistance if requested by the provincial government.

¶18. (U) Governor Wahidi has previously rejected the establishment of free-standing refugee camps in Kunar, however he admitted he would revisit this issue should a larger influx of displaced people occur. A single camp currently exists in Kas Kunar district, supporting

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750 resident returnee families. Provincial authorities are in the process of designing a fully contained city in the vicinity of the existing camp and have set aside approximately 1500 acres of land for this purpose. The new city will be able to accommodate approximately 10,000 residents and include construction of a market, school, and hospital. DoRR expects that many of the new people from Bajaur could be accommodated once the project is completed.

¶19. (U) WHO confirmed four cases of cholera in Kunar, however, the outbreak has been controlled. Afghan Minister of Public Health Fatemi announced on Monday that there are 750 cases of diarrhea across Kunar, Samangan, and Laghman provinces, resulting in 16 deaths. Kunar DoPH will continue to monitor the treatment and status of these cases. TF Duke CMO is ordering an additional 25,000 units of electrolyte replacement therapy/oral rehydration therapy (ERT/ORT) to supplement the existing stockpile of 5,000 units needed to treat diarrhea cases.

¶10. (U) Provincial authorities and international organizations are working closely to assist tribal leaders in managing the existing returnee/refugee population and expected influx of new noncombatants fleeing conflict. Although ICRC claims that it has all the HA resources it needs to handle both the existing population and the potential influx, TF Duke CMO - through UNHCR - will continue to ensure adequate aid supplies are available to provincial authorities.

¶11. (U) POLOFF, Embassy Islamabad has cleared on this cable.

WOOD